

#204: MARCH 2015 A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

# THE INDYPENDENT

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March 2015

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## HOW MUCH DO WE NEED THE POLICE?

BY AARON MIGUEL CANTU, PB



deemed decadent; glorification of Jew-hatred. This is just another form of fascism, mirroring that of the xenophobes Polonyi is ostensibly critiquing. Which is hardly surprising: Her presumptuous use of the pronoun "we" betrays her total identification with the oppressor.

— BILL WEINBERG  
from [ww4report.com](http://ww4report.com)

Dear Bill,  
Thank you for reading my piece in The Indypendent and for writing about it. I enjoyed discovering your blog as a consequence, and especially reading your piece on "atrocious pornography." It made me wonder how media, especially TV but not only, also lend "propaganda assistance" to the Islamic State.

I agree with you that more could have been said in the article about progressive efforts in the Muslim world and in France. In fact, that angle has been vastly underreported. Unfortunately, with a limited word count and being more familiar with France, I chose to focus this particular piece on the French government and its reactions to homegrown extremism.

I'm not sure how the article is a "rejection of modernity," nor how it promotes "intolerance of art deemed decadent" and the "glorification of Jew-hatred."

I would argue that explaining is not excusing, and that my attempts to analyze the social roots of extremist violence in France do

not in any way condone it.  
Though the last line of the article is deliberately provocative, I think if you read the piece carefully, you will find that I in no way identify with the killers, nor am I calling for people to "express solidarity" with them.

Rather, I am saying they should consider the social factors that led the attackers to be radicalized, instead of dismissing them as mere "fanatics" or purely "evil." In my opinion, doing so is vastly underestimating the phenomenon and doing future generations a disservice. And finally, to clarify: as a French citizen, I believe I can use the pronoun "we" as long as I do not abuse it.

— ANNA POLONYI  
FRANCE

### FAST-TRACK RUN AROUND

The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement, the largest in history, was written in secret negotiating sessions over the last five years. Trade representatives from 12 Pacific-rim countries are still working on it with some 600 corporate advisers, including those from Chevron, Halliburton,

Lockheed Martin, Monsanto and National Mining.

Now, legislation that would fast-track the agreement process by giving the president Trade Promotion Authority is expected to be introduced in Congress soon. The legislation would allow the TPP to be pushed through with very little time for study and debate, and President Obama's people and corporate lobbyists are now all over Congress members, carrying every carrot and stick in their arsenal.

We know the devastating results of NAFTA and of various bilateral free trade agreements. The public needs access to the text of the agreement so that the TPP can be debated before the treaty controls the prices of medicine, access to the Internet and GMO labeling, among other aspects of our lives.

For more, see [flushthetpp.org](http://flushthetpp.org).

— SUSAN METZ  
BROOKLYN

## FLOOD WALL STREET 10 FOUND NOT GUILTY

BY INDYPENDENT STAFF

Ten climate change protesters arrested for blocking traffic last September near Wall Street were found not guilty March 5. New York City Criminal Court Judge Robert Mandelbaum ruled that the NYPD's order to disperse violated the First Amendment.

Following the People's Climate March, which drew upwards of 400,000 participants on September 21, several thousand people occupied lower Broadway the following day to highlight Wall Street's central role in financing climate destruction. At day's end, about 100 people — and one man dressed as a polar bear — were arrested for sitting in the street at the intersection of Broadway and Wall. Ten of the arrestees subsequently decided to fight their charges in court.

In his decision, Judge Robert Mandelbaum found that the NYPD's order to disperse was unlawful, and that by ordering protesters to leave the entire Wall Street area, police violated protesters' First Amendment right to carry their message directly to its intended recipients. While Judge Mandelbaum did not accept the defendants' attempt to make a necessity defense, he did break new ground by taking judicial notice that climate change is happening, is a serious problem, requires immediate action and is caused by human activity.

"The importance of judicial notice is that the judge accepted climate change and the need to do something about it as a fact without the necessity of any evidentiary

support or proof at trial," said defense attorney Martin Stolar. "To the best of my knowledge, this is unprecedented and has significance for future litigation involving climate change."

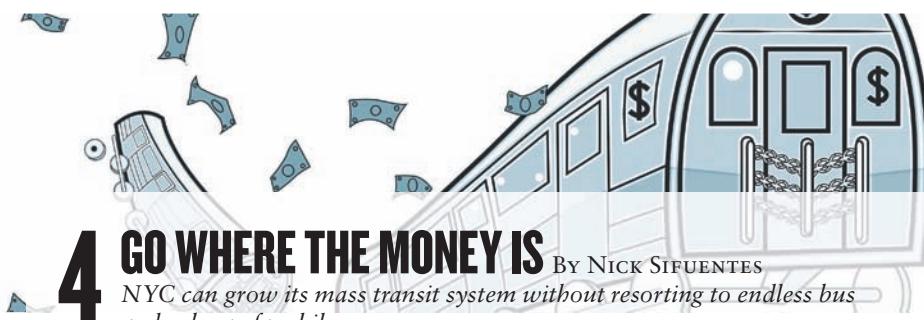
Stolar and fellow attorney Jonathan Wallace represented the defendants pro bono on behalf of the Mass Defense Committee of the New York City Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.



PETER RUGH

**AFTER THE TRIAL:** Members of the Flood Wall Street 10, including *Indypendent* executive editor John Tarleton (bottom row, center), and their lawyers celebrate a not guilty verdict.

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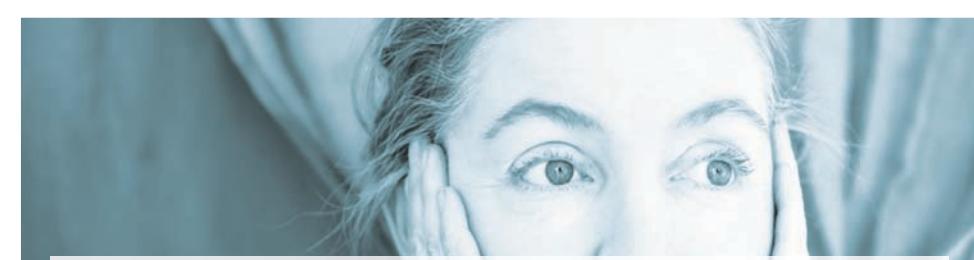
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# HOW TO GET MTA ON TRACK

BY NICK SIFUENTES

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THE INDEPENDENT  
March 2015

**D**uring the depths of the economic recession, Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature took over a quarter billion dollars from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to fill gaps in the state budget. Since then, not only have our elected leaders not restored all the missing funds, they have also continued to steal millions of dollars from dedicated funds that were supposed to go to the MTA. That lack of political support for transit has taken a toll on riders: For the five years following the financial crisis, the cost of riding the subway or bus went up at double the rate of inflation.

Commuter woes haven't ended there. A few years ago, the MTA drastically reduced service, eliminating the V and W trains and 32 bus routes serving every corner of the city. For wealthier New Yorkers, these service reductions were just one more inconvenience in a city often filled with them. However, for residents in low-income, transit-starved neighborhoods, cutting a bus or subway also means cutting a lifeline to jobs, education and economic opportunity.

Now the MTA has announced its five-year Capital Program, \$32 billion in transit projects that the entire region needs to keep our system running. Unfortunately, the plan faces a \$15 billion shortfall that needs to be resolved. If our elected leaders don't fund the full Capital Program, the New York City metropolitan area will be faced with even higher fares and worse service.

It's hard to overstate the importance of a fully funded Capital Program. As New York City grows, we need our transit system to grow along with it. But we also need to make sure

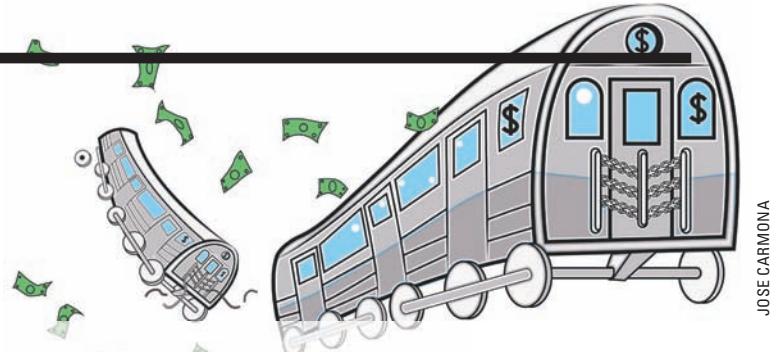
that growth serves more people than just the residents moving into shiny new developments in Manhattan and brownstone Brooklyn. Everyone from the Bronx to Staten Island relies on successful public transit, and we should guarantee that the system works for everyone who needs it. That's why the Riders Alliance is organizing transit riders across the city to push our elected officials to fund and build better transit for every borough. Our members are fighting not just for a transit system that works, but one that is also fair and sustainable. It's not good enough just to fund the Capital Program; it also matters where the money comes from.

If the MTA can't fund its capital plan, we're staring at dramatic fare hikes — the kind that would make recent painful increases seem insignificant. But fare hikes, which are essentially a tax that takes the deepest bite out of the wallets of low-income families, are an unacceptably regressive way to fund a public service that the entire region relies on.

So what's an equitable solution to ensure that the burden doesn't fall unfairly on the riders who need mass transit the most?

#### GO WHERE THE MONEY IS

On February 19, a coalition of transit advocacy groups, including the Riders Alliance, proposed Move NY, a plan that would fund the MTA by reducing tolls on outlying bridges in the outer boroughs and placing tolls on the four bridges leading into Manhattan's Central Business District (CBD) below 60th Street, as well as a toll to drive into the district from the north. Those funds would be reinvested in our subways, buses, bridges and streets, making every form of transit, including car travel, better for everyone. Meanwhile, tolls on



JOSE CARMONA

bridges that do not lead into the CBD would decrease by as much as 48 percent, and commuters who take mass transit would be exempt from any tolls to enter the CBD.

No one wants to pay tolls — or fares — to get around the city. But the status quo is not a progressive option. Choosing not to fully fund the capital plan, or to fund it through more unsupported MTA borrowing, will result in reduced service and higher fares for millions of working people throughout New York.

Charging drivers to enter the CBD and reducing tolls on other bridges would save money for some drivers, would cost more for drivers who have the most alternative options, and, most important, would create a new revenue stream to power the next generation of public transportation. If we don't make these hard choices, the alternative will be higher fares, worse service and a disproportionate burden for New Yorkers who earn the least.

In our democracy, the only constituencies that get their needs met are those who are educated, organized and vocal. There are more than 8 million people on the subway, bus and commuter rail every day in New York. It could be the most powerful constituency in New York, and that's why we're organizing, neighborhood by neighborhood, subway stop by subway stop, to guarantee that transit riders have a strong voice on the issues that affect them most.

*Nick Sifuentes is the deputy director of the Riders Alliance. For more, see [ridersny.org](http://ridersny.org).*

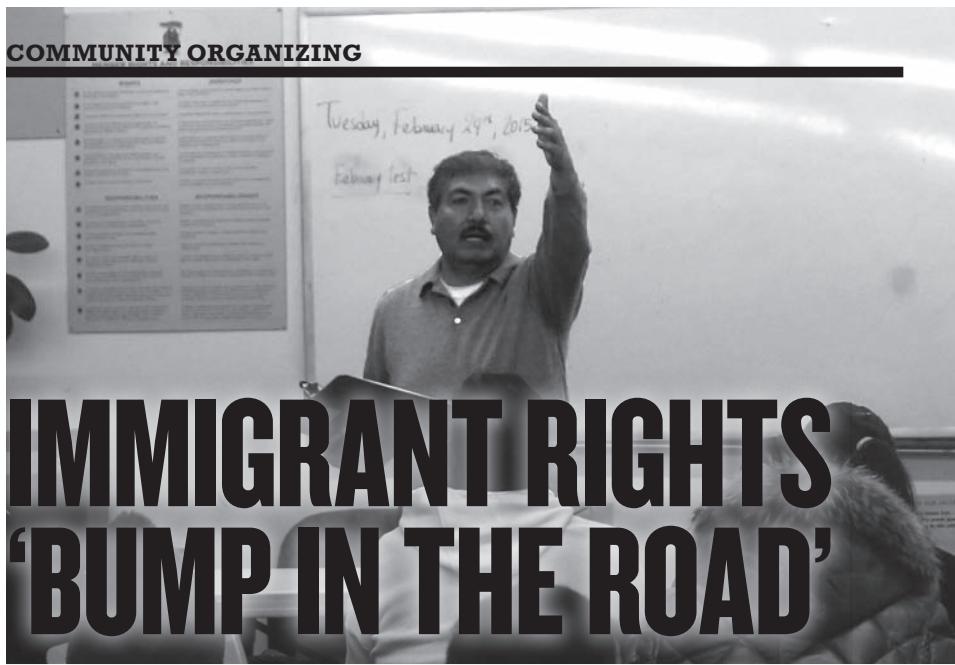
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# SKILLS FOR THE REVOLUTION



ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

# IMMIGRANT RIGHTS 'BUMP IN THE ROAD'

BY ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA

**GETTING PREPARED:** Make the Road organizer Vicente Mayorga discusses the eligibility criteria of President Obama's administrative relief for immigrants at a meeting with undocumented immigrants in Jackson Heights, Queens.

**W**e are confident that the process will continue and you'll eventually be able to apply," said attorney Nicholas Katz, in Spanish, to a room of some 30 immigrants in Jackson Heights, Queens, on the evening of February 24. It was a week after a federal judge issued an injunction against the expansion of President Barack Obama's administrative relief for immigrants, effectively grinding the rollout of the programs to a halt.

Katz and organizer Vicente Mayorga then led the immigrants through a 28-question worksheet that would help staffers at Make the Road New York (MRNY), a community-based organization, determine their potential eligibility for immigration relief. Despite the legal limbo in which the new federal programs — which could grant more than 4 million immigrants work authorization and protection from deportation — now reside as a result of the injunction, they and immigrant rights organizers around the country are pressing ahead with preparing people to apply.

"I'd like to have a paper and not live in the dark," said Graciela Flores, 39, after the immigration relief workshop concluded. She emigrated from Mexico 17 years ago and is working off the books to support three children, two of them U.S. citizens. "How to explain to a 7-year-old that mama goes back to Mexico because DAPA is stopped?"

In New York City, an estimated 250,000 immigrants are eligible for the two programs: DAPA, for undocumented parents of U.S. citizen or permanent resident children, and the expansion of the 2012 DACA program, for immigrants who came to the United States as children. They were challenged in a lawsuit filed by Texas and 25 other mostly red states after being announced by Obama on November 20. The plaintiffs filed in Brownsville, Texas, the district of notoriously anti-immigrant judge Andrew Hanen.

"It's no secret that Republican governors went cherry-picking for a conservative judge who has made a name for himself on this issue," said Daniel Altschuler, community outreach and research coordinator at MRNY. "His ruling, while very troubling, was not terribly surprising."

The Obama administration has since filed for an emergency stay of the injunction in Judge Hanen's court, and as *The Independent* went to press, he had not yet ruled on it. It is widely expected that Hanen will not grant the stay and that the motion, along with the administration's appeal, will go to the Fifth Circuit Court in New Orleans, one of the most conservative appellate courts in the country.

The timing of the programs' rollout will remain uncertain as the lawsuit winds its way

through the courts. DAPA was slated to begin taking applications in May, and expanded DACA, which opens the 2012 program to childhood arrivals older than 30, on February 18.

It may take up to two months for the courts to make a final ruling on the stay and between four months and a year on the appeal, according to National Immigration Law Center attorney Alvaro Huerta, who worked on an amicus brief in the case.

U.S. courts have repeatedly affirmed the executive's discretionary authority over immigration enforcement. Emphasizing this precedent, the Obama administration, immigrant rights advocates and their Democratic allies have lined up behind the message that the injunction is only a "bump in the road."

"We want these programs to be implemented as soon as possible, because we don't want people to be discouraged," Huerta said. "To the extent that the injunction is having a negative effect, the community is confused and needs information on what's going to happen next."

The injunction does not apply to the original DACA program, which continues to take applications, or to the new enforcement guidelines that Obama paired with his DAPA and DACA announcement in November. Those directives instructed Immigration and Customs Enforcement to focus resources on deporting immigrants with certain kinds of criminal convictions and prior deportation orders, as well as new arrivals. Obama has said that even with the legal uncertainty over administrative relief, those who qualify "should be in a good place," though enforcement data for the period since the guidelines went into effect on January 5 have not been made available.

Obama is facing a barrage of attacks over his immigration policies from GOP hardliners. Hanen's ruling came last month amid a fierce inside-the-Beltway scuffle over funding for the Department of Homeland Security, which congressional Republicans tried to tie to a measure that would defund the administrative relief programs.

While the GOP ultimately lost that fight, any hope for a path to citizenship for the country's estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants continues to languish alongside a long-untouched immigration reform bill in Congress.

"We've always been listening to the politicians," said Leonor Rojas, in Spanish, after the Queens immigration workshop. She immigrated to the United States from Mexico in 1991 and like her friend Graciela, is still undocumented. "The problem is they aren't listening to us."



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# THE WAR ON TEACHERS

## CUOMO, CORPORATE REFORMERS TAKE AIM AT EXPERIENCED EDUCATORS

BY GEORGE JOSEPH & JOHN TARLETON

**W**hen discussing how to improve public education, Governor Andrew Cuomo likes to complain about how difficult it is to fire “bad teachers” and the need to reduce job security for classroom educators. He is not alone in this. The Partnership for Educational Justice, a well-funded nonprofit fronted by former CNN host Campbell Brown, is pursuing a lawsuit in a Staten Island court that seeks to scrap teacher tenure protections. Both New York City tabloids, meanwhile, never miss a chance to promote a lurid teacher sex scandal and then denounce the teachers union for protecting the right of the accused to a fair hearing.

But what if the real teaching crisis in New York is not the inability to get rid of bad teachers, but the failure to keep experienced and highly capable teachers and allow them to do their jobs?

Take Michelle Baptiste. A teacher at an elementary school in Flatbush, Brooklyn, with 22 years of experience, Baptiste, 47, has watched with dismay in recent years as standardized testing has taken on an increasingly central role in her classroom. Long gone are the early years of her career when she was allowed to creatively respond to her mostly Black and Latino students’ needs and interests and teach them culturally relevant lessons.

Starting in third grade, students at Baptiste’s school are deluged with a battery of federal and state tests, periodic assessment tests, practice tests to be taken in preparation for the real tests and field tests that are carried out to help test manufacturers develop questions for future tests. In addition to preparing lesson plans and grading homework and tests, teachers are expected to log their students’ various test results into Excel spreadsheets.

When Baptiste was slow to fill in a spreadsheet for a test she administered in the fall of 2012, she says her principal put a letter in her personnel file and later gave her an Unsatisfactory (or “U”) rating for the year.

Baptiste told *The Indypendent* she had been too busy meeting during after-school hours with the families of troubled children in her class — including some who did not have stable housing — to keep on schedule with entering data, which she described as “garbage.” Still, she recognizes her actions put her career in peril.

“If you get enough of these letters in your file, you can be brought up on charges of incompetence and you can lose your livelihood,” said Baptiste. She has switched to teaching second grade, where students are tested less frequently.

### PRINCIPALS FROM HELL

For Angela — a Brooklyn middle school teacher of more than 10 years who did not wish to be identified by her real name because she feared retaliation — work became hellish when her school’s inexperienced young principal took to berating both students and teachers in the school’s hallways for their allegedly poor performances.

“She would tell teachers they didn’t know what they were doing, and then turn to students letting them know they were going to get someone ‘better,’” Angela said. The constant abuse, she added, drove many of the school’s teachers to psychological collapse and even suicidal thoughts. She later transferred to another school.

Teacher anxiety and stress became widespread during the administration of business mogul-turned-mayor Michael Bloomberg. Principals were freed from traditional oversight by district superintendents and elevated to CEO-like status at their schools. In return for greater autonomy in budgeting and hiring, principals were expected to deliver higher standardized test scores or risk losing their jobs and having their schools closed. Utilizing high-pressure tactics against teachers became an expected practice. Yet, many principals who had come up

through the teaching ranks and believed in a more collegial approach to running their schools initially balked at implementing practices that were lifted straight from the corporate world.

In 2004 Schools Chancellor Joel Klein founded the New York City Leadership Academy, which recruited ambitious young teachers who had little or no connection to traditional educational practices and trained them to be principals in the Bloomberg image. From the start, business leaders, not career educators, ran the Leadership Academy. One “instructor” at the Academy, for instance, was former General Electric CEO Jack Welch, who earned his corporate management fame by creating systems for identifying and firing the bottom 10 percent of his managers annually.

The Leadership Academy drastically reconfigured the city’s education landscape. Today, its graduates, comprising roughly one in six city principals, are widely feared by teachers as some of the most demanding and least knowledgeable supervisors one could have the misfortune of working under. Mayor Bill de Blasio’s Schools Chancellor Carmen Farina has modified Klein’s approach, requiring administrators to gain seven years of experience before becoming eligible to become a principal. Yet for many teachers, the damage has already been done.

“I have never met a compassionate assistant principal or an intelligent principal,” says Tanya Thurman, who spent eight years teaching in several city high schools. She quit her job last fall, exhausted by the constant emotional abuse, sexual harassment and incompetence with which unchecked administrators treated her.

“My assistant principal was absolutely disgusting. I walked in on him cornering a special education teacher in the library,” Thurman told *The Indypendent*. “He would even eye students who came into his office. I started encouraging teachers, who started coming to me, that I could be a witness for them, but as a young teacher there’s so many fears, not just sexual harassment.”

Thurman now works as an editor at McGraw-Hill Education and deejays in New York’s thriving underground dance music scene. She says she has no desire to teach again.

Her departure reflects a larger trend. According to a 2014 report by the United Federation of Teachers, 32,000 teachers have left city schools to take their talents elsewhere or have exited the profession altogether since 2002. Among mid-career teachers with six to 15 years of experience, the number of resignations per year leapt from 500 to 900 between 2008 and 2013.

“That’s a very serious loss. There’s a lot of evidence that people don’t become master teachers until after five, maybe seven years,” said Lois Weiner, a professor of education at New Jersey City University. “It’s a generation of experienced teachers who will not be serving New York City public school kids.”

To Weiner, the exodus of experienced teachers is not an accident but part of a larger drive by policymakers to transform teaching into a deskilled, low-wage job performed mostly by middle-class whites for a few years after college before moving on to other work.

“There’s a long-term commitment to alter who teaches and how long they teach,” Weiner said. “If they [policymakers] wanted teaching to be a career, they wouldn’t be attacking the pensions.”

### BLEACHING THE TEACHING FORCE

Meanwhile, experienced people of color educators like Baptiste and Angela find themselves in an increasingly difficult situation. According to the New York City Department of Education, whites make up 15 percent of students and 59 percent of teachers while Blacks and Latinos make up 68 percent of students but only 34 percent of the teaching force. The skewed racial composition of

**STUDENTS FIRST:** Brooklyn elementary school teacher Michelle Baptiste got in trouble with her principal when she used her after-school hours to meet with families of troubled children instead of entering her students’ standardized test results into an Excel spreadsheet.



**IN THE BRONX:**  
Aixa Rodriguez  
teaches ESL to  
ninth and tenth  
graders.

**TAKE THIS JOB AND...**: Tanya Thurman quit last fall after teaching for eight years at several city high schools. She now works as an editor at McGraw-Hill Education and is a DJ in New York City’s underground dance music scene.

ALEX ELLFSON



the city's public school teachers is also reflected in hiring practices. In 2000-2001, the number of new hires by race were 53 percent white, 27 percent Black and 16 percent Latino, according to the Independent Budget Office. By 2011-2013, those numbers were 68, 11 and 14 percent, respectively.

During the Bloomberg administration, more than 140 schools were closed, mostly in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods where experienced Black teachers were most heavily concentrated. Scores of schools were also required to share their space with privately run charter schools whose teachers tend to be young, white and non-unionized.

"Ten years ago, 90 percent of the teachers at my school were teachers of color," Baptiste noted. "Now maybe half the teachers, mostly from the charter school in the building, are white."

Similar developments have unfolded in a number of big cities, including Philadelphia, New Orleans, Chicago and Washington, D.C., where large numbers of inner city school closings have thinned the ranks of people of color teachers whose tenure protections are of little use under such circumstances

"In every case Black teachers are caught in the crossfire, as they tend to be heavily concentrated in schools with predominantly Black student bodies," education reporter and parent activist Melinda Anderson wrote in *Ebony* last year.

Andre Perry, the dean of urban education at Davenport University in Grand Rapids, Michigan, has concluded that the nationwide attack on teacher tenure is "actually an attack on black professionals" who have accrued decades of pension and health care benefits, not to mention salaries that supersede the de facto racism of the labor market.

In replacing veteran educators with inexperienced graduates from elite

universities, as seen in programs like Teach for America, policymakers save millions while relying on racist tropes of veteran public sector workers as incompetent and lazy to justify their dismissals.

"Education reformers stigmatize these veteran teachers in the press, jostle them from school to school, so that they can replace them with 24-year-olds fresh from college," said Bronx ESL teacher Aixa Rodriguez.

While there are outstanding teachers of all races, students of color suffer when they have few instructors who look like them and who can be role models for achieving success.

"The principals," Weiner said, "who are mostly young white males, don't value what these teachers bring—their relationships in the community and their understanding of the issues their students face."

The same could be said of Governor Cuomo and his headline-grabbing plan

### **POLICYMAKERS ARE USING RACIST TROPES TO DISPLACE TEACHERS OF COLOR.**

to create a tougher teacher evaluation process. Under Cuomo's proposal, 50 percent of a teacher's rating would be based on state test scores (as opposed to the current 20 percent), 35 percent would be based on a one-day visit by an "independent outside observer" and 15 percent by a principal or assistant principals. Some version of Cuomo's proposal could be enacted by the March 31 deadline for completing the state's annual budget.

"People of color teachers are going to be the first ones he comes after," Baptiste said. "It's hard to move the needle, especially when you don't get any funding and support."

ERSSELLA FERRON

ALEXELLEFSON

**"It is an absolute outrage that Chelsea Manning is currently languishing behind bars whilst those she helped to expose, who are potentially guilty of human rights violations, enjoy impunity."**

**Erika Guevara Rosas**  
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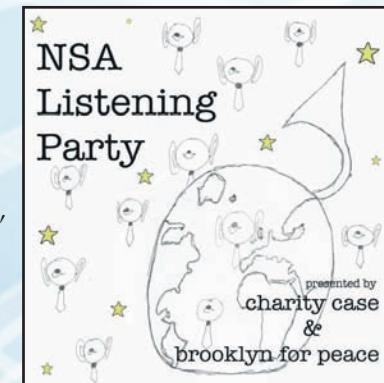
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# PUTTING CUNY OUT OF REACH AS STUDENT TUITION INCREASES, STATE FUNDING FALLS SHORT

BY ALEX ELLEFSON

**I**t was an icy February morning in Albany. Hundreds of students from New York's public colleges streamed out of buses near the state capitol building. Some of them had woken up as early as 5 a.m. and been on the road for almost four hours in order to meet with their representatives and pass along an urgent message: that their colleges need greater investment and that the next state budget is the place to deliver it.

Queens College student Mohammed Samra said he had never seen so many students come out to Albany. The first time he made the trip was almost four years ago, after the state voted to increase tuition at New York's public colleges by \$1,500 over five years. Now, as the City University of New York (CUNY) system — which includes Queens College and 10 other senior colleges, as well as seven community colleges — and State University of New York (SUNY) schools enter the final year of the painful tuition hikes, Samra said the large turnout showed that students were feeling the pinch.

"We're here to say: You've got to give us a break. Every time there's a shortage of money in the system, you can't reach into the students' pockets," he said.

CUNY was founded in 1847 as the Free Academy of the City of New York with the purpose of offering free higher education to "the children of the whole people." It went on to provide a free college education to generations of students from working-class and immigrant families, and CUNY's present-day student body continues to be made up of students of mostly modest means. But since tuition was introduced in 1976 the cost of attending has steadily increased, to more than \$6,000 at the senior colleges and \$4,500 at the community colleges for this academic year.

In 2011, Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature teamed up to pass NYSUNY 2020, a bill that allowed CUNY and SUNY, New York's public university systems, to raise tuition by \$300 per year for five years. The tuition hikes were meant to address deficits resulting from the steep budget cuts that followed the 2008 recession, which was accompanied by a surge in college enrollment. As part of the bill, the state pledged to provide consistent funding levels every year so that the extra tuition revenue would go toward reducing class sizes, increasing resources for student services and improving graduation rates.

However, before the bill passed, Cuomo stripped out a provision introduced by the legislature that would have required the state to cover increases in mandatory costs. Each year, the cost of operating CUNY rises due to rent hikes, increasing supplies and equipment expenditures, higher energy costs and mandatory step increases in pay for full-time faculty and staff.

This year, Cuomo's executive budget doesn't allocate a penny to cover the \$62.9 million in mandatory costs at CUNY's senior colleges. The state budget process is currently in its last stages, with last-minute deals being negotiated in Albany before the March 31 deadline.

If a deal is not made to cover CUNY's mandatory costs, the burden will once again fall on the students' shoulders. Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents CUNY faculty and professional staff, said that the failure to cover these costs amounts to another form of state disinvestment in higher education.

"You cannot call [the state's funding] consistent when the real dollar value of the money is less and less," she said. "This is a really critical year because we're coming into the last year of the SUNY 2020 program. The failure to cover inflationary costs needs to be fixed. Otherwise, we'll just see a continuing spiral of disinvestment and students carrying more and more of the weight of paying for a college education."

## DECades of Declining Support

For decades, the state has been withdrawing its financial support for CUNY colleges and asking students to make up the difference. Since 1990, state support for CUNY's senior colleges has declined by more than a quarter, falling from 74 to 53 percent as a proportion of total revenue. At community colleges, the state's contribution has fallen from 36 to 25 percent. During that time, the proportion of total revenue contributed by students through tuition and fees has more than doubled.

The higher tuition rates have not provided students with greater access to full-time faculty. In 1975, the last year that CUNY offered a free education, there were 11,500 full-time faculty members teaching 250,000 students. Today enrollment is at an all-time high of about 274,000 students. Meanwhile, there are only 7,500 full-time faculty employed at CUNY, according to testimony given by CUNY Chancellor James Milliken to the state Assembly earlier this year.

CUNY relies on poorly paid, part-time adjunct faculty to teach the majority of its classes.

"A big part of the higher education experience for students is having mentorship and guidance from full-time professors," said CUNY-City Tech student Lucas Almonte, who is also the vice chair of legislative affairs for CUNY's University Student Senate. "A lot of CUNY students come from low-income backgrounds, immigrant backgrounds, and many of us are the first in our family to go to college. We need people to help us navigate the college experience and full-time faculty are our mentors."

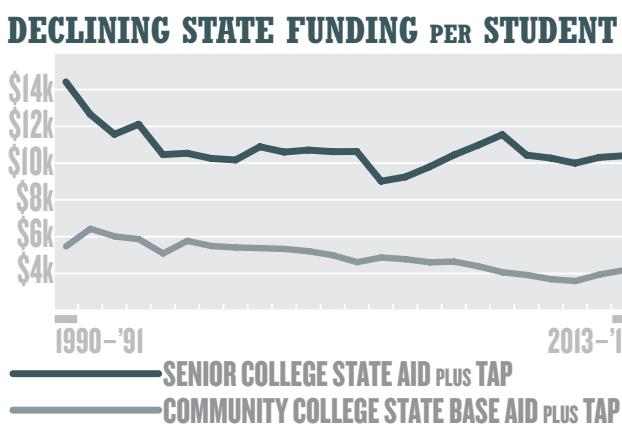
According to a survey conducted by CUNY last year, more than half of CUNY undergraduate students come from households earning less than \$30,000 a year. Seventy-five percent of CUNY students are people of color and 42 percent are the first generation in their family to attend college.

However, Cuomo's 2015-2016 executive budget cuts funding to some of the programs proven to have the greatest success at improving graduation and retention rates for low-income students.

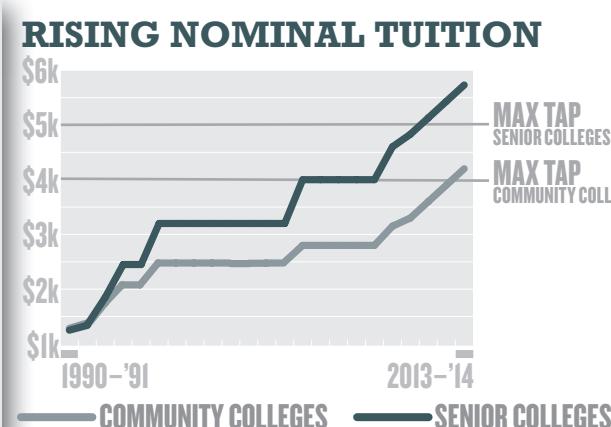
One of these, CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), was slated by the governor to have all \$1.7 million of its state funding cut. The program is now in its eighth year and provides admitted low-income community college students with additional advisement services and financial support. It has seen great successes, with graduation rates for ASAP students coming out more than three times higher than the national average for urban community colleges. More than 8,000 students have participated during these eight years, though that is only a small fraction of the student population at the city's community colleges, which had almost 100,000 students enrolled in fall 2013.

Cuomo's executive budget withdraws support from ASAP at a time when other liberal politicians are championing the program. President Barack Obama cited ASAP as an effective means to improve graduation rates while outlining his plan to provide free tuition for most community college students. Meanwhile, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has pledged to provide CUNY with an additional \$35 million in order to expand the program over the next five years. New York City already contributes almost 90 percent of ASAP's \$17.1 million budget.

A year ago, the state Legislature restored ASAP's state funding after Cuomo cut it from his budget. The CUNY students who traveled to Albany in February asked lawmak-



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**LOOKS LIKE**

ers to reinstate it once again.

CUNY spokesperson Michael Arena also expressed hope that funding for ASAP will be restored by the legislature. He added that the governor's budget "includes many important advancements for CUNY," such as new funding for teacher training in early childhood education and endorsement of the New York Dream Act.

In a notable step for immigrant rights in New York, Cuomo included a Dream Act provision in his executive budget proposal that would make the state's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) available to undocumented immigrant students in New York. Many believe that his inclusion of the measure in the executive budget almost guarantees that it will pass, but considering that Albany conservatives have obstructed passage of the state Dream Act for years, it remains to be seen what the outcome of the negotiations will be.

Many students who traveled to Albany said they support the Dream Act funding. But while expanding TAP to include undocumented immigrants would be a great achievement, they also said there are many other barriers to receiving TAP that need to be lifted. In the past, the state Legislature has voted to stop making the funds available to graduate students, those who are incarcerated and those who have defaulted on federal student loans.

More important, when TAP was introduced in the 1970s, it was designed to meet the needs of traditional students who enrolled in college full-time right out of high school and either lived on campus or with their parents. The demographics at public colleges, and especially community colleges, have changed considerably since then. Many adults are returning to school after they've joined the workforce and some of them have families to support.

"TAP was originally designed for a different kind of student. The student of 1973 is really not the same as the student of 2015," said Farouk Abdallah, deputy director of the New York Public Interest Group (NYPiRG), which is the state's largest student advocacy group.

One aspect of TAP that Abdallah said increases college dropout rates is the requirement that a student be enrolled full time for the first two semesters of college. Many students fold under the pressure to work and study full time.

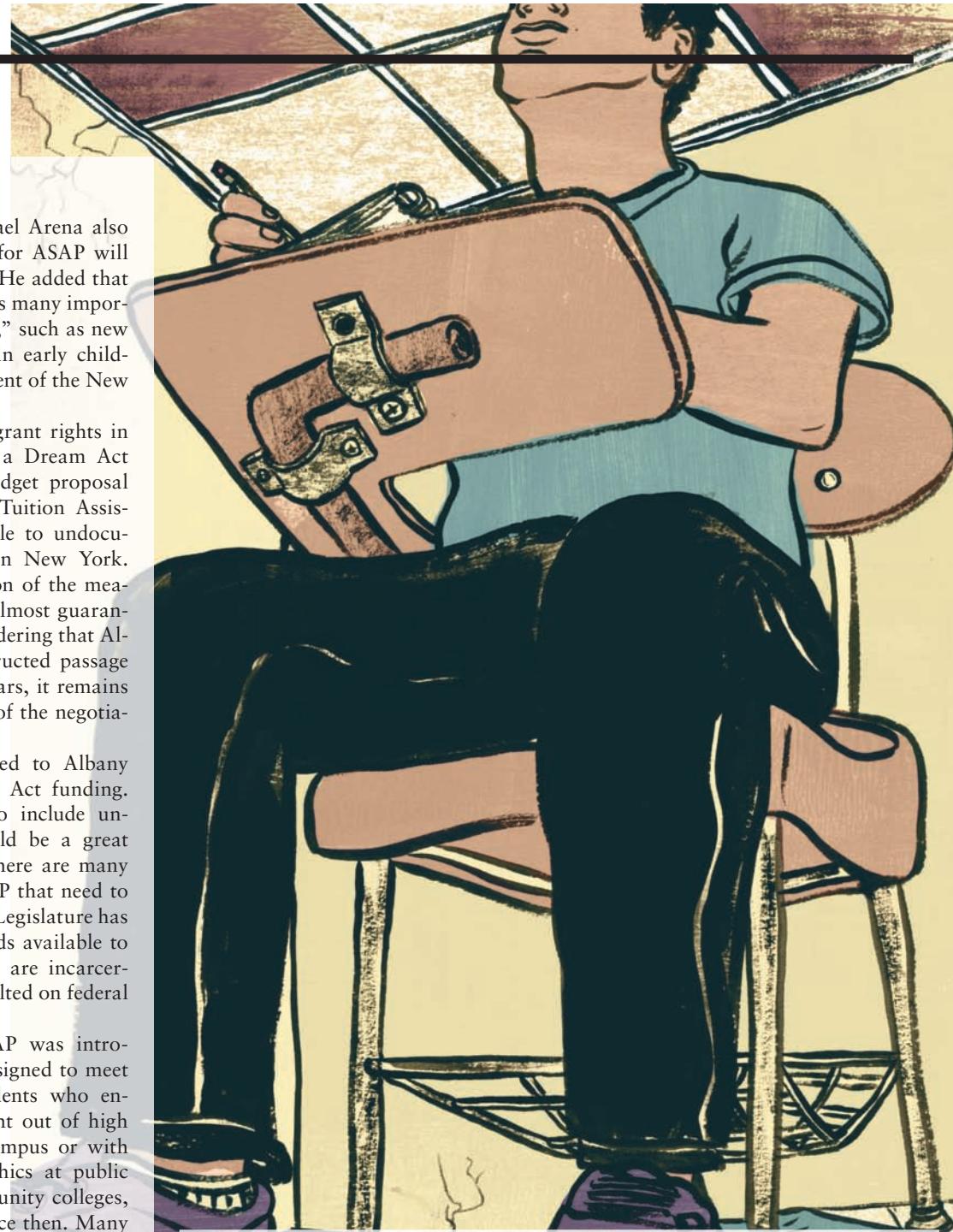
Pawel Rosanski, who just began taking classes at CUNY's Borough of Manhattan Community College this year, had to enroll full time in order to qualify for TAP while also working part time at a coffee shop. He said his schedule is exhausting.

"The pressure is really horrible because I have no days off. If I could go to school part time it would be much easier," he said.

Despite only having been enrolled in CUNY for a few weeks, Pawel said he made the trip up to Albany this year because he believes public higher education should be free.

"Education is the first step in decreasing the economic gap between rich and poor. If people don't have access to that, then you can't fight income inequality," he said. "The government should start working for its people. We shouldn't have to come here to fight for people to attend college."

Alex Ellefson is an Indypendent editorial fellow and a 2014 graduate of CUNY-Brooklyn College.



## LIFE SURE IS GOOD ON MILLIKEN'S ISLAND

*At CUNY more than half of the undergraduates come from households that make less than \$30,000 per year, legions of part-time instructors eke out a subsistence wage and the faculty has been working under an expired contract since 2010. But that doesn't mean everyone is struggling financially.*

*For exhibit A, there's CUNY Chancellor James Milliken. His base pay is \$670,000 per year. He also receives an \$18,000 per month housing allowance that allows him to live for free in a swanky Upper East Side pad that has four bedrooms, four-and-a-half baths, a formal dining room and a terrace. He also receives a free car and driver and is allowed to make additional money sitting on corporate boards. Should he last five years at CUNY, he will be entitled to a full year's pay upon his departure, even if he is fired with cause.*

*Milliken's golden parachute, however, can hardly touch that of his predecessor, Matthew Goldstein, who resigned as chancellor in 2013 to become board chair of J.P. Morgan Funds with an estimated salary of at least \$500,000 per year. Before Goldstein left for Wall Street, the CUNY Board of Trustees crowned him "Chancellor Emeritus," which entitled him to one year of "study leave" at \$490,000 plus five more years at a salary of \$300,000, for a total payoff of \$1.95 million over six years.*

*Chancellors aren't the only CUNY administrators doing well for themselves. In June 2012, less than eight months after approving a five-year, 31 percent tuition hike for students, the CUNY board increased the upper limit of the pay scale for senior executive titles by 41 percent. Maximum pay for CUNY college presidents was bumped up by 23-29 percent, putting them all on a path to making over \$300,000 per year.*

*On the day the new pay scale was approved, students barred from entering the board meeting erupted in protest in the hallway outside. They were quickly hustled out of the building by CUNY security officers.*

— JOHN TARLETON

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# 'WE ARE NEXT'

## 10 CALIFORNIA LOOKS TO FOLLOW NY'S FRACKING BAN, BUT CAN THEY WIN IN BIG OIL'S BACKYARD?

BY JIMMY TOBIAS

Juan Flores stands in the community garden at Sequoia Elementary School in Shafter, California, and points to one, two, three oil wells within view of the school. The closest well stands the length of a couple of football fields from the edge of the garden, and all day its pump slides up and down sucking crude oil from the earth.

"There are probably a hundred wells within a mile radius of this school," says Flores, an environmental organizer and the son of local farmworkers. "And many of them have been fracked." The tall well at the edge of school property is the nearest example.

Before Flores can say more, a man in a white truck comes by and tells us that the farmer next door is about to spray pesticides on his almond grove. The wind is blowing in the direction of the garden and the school. It's time to leave.

This is life in Kern County, one of the most productive and poisoned places in California. Located at the southern end of California's Central Valley, Kern County boasts a \$6.7-billion farm economy that churns out huge quantities of almonds, grapes and other foodstuffs each year. It's a place where farmworkers fill the fields and crop dusters zip across the sky. About 75 percent of in-state oil production also takes place here, according to the local Chamber of Commerce. Wells, pumps, storage tanks and oil workers in big white trucks seem to be around every bend.

Air pollution, meanwhile, is out of control. The county seat, Bakersfield, consistently ranks near the top of the American Lung Association's list of cities with terrible air quality. One in 10 adults in the county suffer from active

### FRACKING ROUNDUP

This year has been bad for frackers on the other side of the Atlantic. In late January, Scotland placed a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing and other unconventional methods of oil and gas extraction. Wales followed in the footsteps of its northern compatriots in early February when the National Assembly there voted to prohibit fracking until the practice is proven safe. Meanwhile, in North America, a moratorium in the Canadian province of New Brunswick is almost three months old and going strong.

In the United States, however, progress has been slow. After New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's historic decision to ban the practice, anti-fracking activist endured setbacks in the Midwest and elsewhere. On February 18, for instance, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled in a 4-3 vote that

cases of asthma, according to state data. Water resources are also damaged. Kern River, for instance, which runs through much of the county, is as dry as parchment paper and filled with weeds.

Flores is concerned about air quality, about drought, about the poverty that haunts many of the region's Latino farmworkers. But at the moment, of all these maladies, his focus is on hydraulic fracturing, colloquially known as fracking. The extraction technique, Flores says, is being used all over Kern County and could poison precious water supplies, make people sick, kill crops and destroy jobs. As a result, he and his coworkers at the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, an environmental justice group based in Kern County, have become leaders in California's growing anti-fracking movement. Along with groups like 350.org and Food & Water Watch, they want Governor Jerry Brown of California to follow New York's example and ban the practice altogether. So far Brown, who considers himself a leader in the fight against climate change, has not budged.

#### ALONG HISTORY

Fracking for oil has been ongoing in California for decades. It involves injecting chemicals, water and sand into oil wells at high speeds in order to create fractures in the rock below and thereby increase oil production. About one fifth of California's oil production over the last decade came from fracked wells. Oil operators in the state installed 125 to 175 fracked wells every month during the same period, according to a recent study required by the 2013 law that regulates fracking here.

As the number of wells has grown, concern over the cocktail of chemicals involved in the fracking process has kept pace. Such chemicals include hydrochloric acid, potassium hydroxide, ammonium chloride, peroxydisulfates and a variety of petroleum distillates.

Fracking has evolved during the years," says Flores. "Back in the '70s and '80s they used this technique, but they were not putting all of these chemicals into the ground then. We worry the chemicals will find their way back to the aquifers." California has to protect its water resources, he says, especially during this historic drought.

His concerns carry weight. Last July a group called the Concerned Health Professionals of New York published a report on the health impacts of hydraulic fracturing. The report included a list of incidents in which fracking had caused water and air pollution in states across the country, including California, and concluded that "drinking water is at risk from drilling and fracking activities and associated waste disposal practices." New York Governor Andrew Cuomo relied on the published compendium's findings when he decided to

— JIMMY TOBIAS

ban fracking in the state in December.

Indeed, New York's leadership on the issue of hydraulic fracturing has given a major boost to activists here. "We arm ourselves with the fact that New York had this incredible victory," says Alexandra Nagy, an organizer with Food & Water Watch. "We are next."

But unlike New York, where the oil and gas industry is relatively weak, California is an oil state and has been for more than a century. After Texas and North Dakota, it produces more crude than any other state in the nation: nearly 200 million barrels per year. It's where Chevron is headquartered and where Upton Sinclair wrote his famous 1927 novel *Oil!*, which portrays the hysteria and corruption that marked the oil industry's early years here. The industry's influence remains strong. According to the *Sacramento Business Journal*, the Western States Petroleum Association spent nearly \$9 million lobbying the state government last year, while Chevron and Phillips 66 spent \$4.2 million and \$1.5 million, respectively. Big Oil is big in California. It will be hard to beat.

To combat that power, anti-fracking activists have organized a diverse coalition that spans the state. That diversity was on display at the March for Real Climate Leadership on February 7, when thousands of people converged in downtown Oakland to persuade the governor to buck Big Oil and ban fracking. People across the state took buses, carpools and planes to participate in the protest. Walking through the crowd that day, you saw farmworkers from Kern County; Zen Buddhists from San Francisco; students from Santa Barbara; artists from Oakland; members of the Ohlone tribe; representatives of UNITE HERE, the UAW and AFSCME; people from Benicia, Carson City, Chico, Los Angeles, San Benito and more.

Organizers from 350.org and Food & Water Watch deemed the march a grand success. They said 8,000 people participated in what was the "largest anti-fracking demonstration in U.S. history." The oil industry, however, was quick to attack. Dave Quast, a spokesman for Energy In Depth California, an industry-funded group, called the march "a lot of sound and fury" and noted that the Oakland Police Department estimated the crowd at only 2,000 people. The governor's office has not commented on the demonstration.

But California's anti-fracking activists, aware of the New York movement's successful strategy, are not waiting on Brown to take action. They're organizing in cities and counties across the state, hoping to ban fracking at the local level and build up the kind of pressure that could force Brown's hand. Already, the counties of Mendocino, San Benito and Santa Cruz have banned the practice. Organizers are also pushing local prohibitions in Carson City, Chico, Los Angeles, Monterey and Oakland, and hope to win despite serious pushback from industry.

"We were bombarded by an unbelievable number of TV, radio and Internet commercials funded by the oil industry," says Andrew Hsia-Coron, who helped spearhead the ballot initiative that successfully banned fracking in San Benito

last fall. "We won because we gave people a sense that they owned their future here, that it was their choice and not the oil industry's choice."

**KERN COUNTY**  
One place that hasn't seen success, at least not yet, is Kern County. Activists, organizers and concerned residents there have not tried to push for a fracking ban at the county level, where support for the industry is strong. The county budget, after all, relies heavily on oil royalties — in January Kern officials declared a fiscal emergency as a result of dropping oil prices. Instead, organizers are hoping for a statewide ban that only the governor can provide.

Juan Flores, for his part, believes the movement will get the prohibition it seeks. "I am an organizer," he says. "I believe in people power. So yes, I have hope." But it is not at all certain that Brown will give them what they want, despite his stated commitment to combating climate change and his ambitious renewable energy agenda. At a press conference the day before the Oakland anti-fracking demonstration, Brown seemed resistant to the protesters' demands. "Whatever we don't do here," he said, referring to oil production, "we're going to get from somewhere else." And if fracking is not banned in Kern County, whether by state or local offi-

**NO TO FRACKING:** An estimated 8,000 anti-fracking protesters marched February 7 in Oakland demanding that California Governor Jerry Brown ban fracking. It was the largest anti-fracking protest to date in the United States.



KELLY JOHNSON

cials, then the majority of California's fracked oil wells will remain intact and operational.

"If we are going to be serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, about meeting our reduction targets, we are going to have to leave the oil in the ground," says Tom Frantz, an almond farmer in Kern County who lives within a couple of miles of multiple fracked oil wells and worries about air and water pollution. "But I'm not too optimistic." He says that if a fracking ban is not presently attainable in Kern — and he doesn't think one is — then he'd like to see better regulations, like a prohibition of fracking on prime farmlands and near important water sources.

Juan Flores, for his part, believes the movement will get the prohibition it seeks. "I am an organizer," he says. "I believe in people power. So yes, I have hope."

Flores says he'll travel the roads around Shafter and Bakersfield, Delano and Wasco, knocking on doors and meeting with neighbors, until Kern County and California are no longer subject to Big Oil's bad ideas.

# GREECE AGAINST THE EUR-OWE ZONE

BY STANLEY ARONOWITZ

Greece has been in an economic death spiral since 2009. Saddled with huge foreign debts, it was forced by the European Union to adopt a draconian austerity program of hefty tax increases on working people and deep cuts in public spending. This has choked growth and caused the economy to contract by 25 percent. Unemployment has soared above 25 percent and more than a third of Greeks now live in poverty. For many the best chance of finding their next meal lies in picking through garbage.

Radical economist Yanis Varoufakis famously described the EU-backed austerity program as “fiscal waterboarding.” For all their troubles, the Greeks have watched their country’s debt to GDP ratio actually climb to 175 percent due to a shrinking economy.

Faced with more pointless and punishing austerity for the foreseeable future, on January 25 Greek voters revolted and swept the radical left party Syriza into power on the basis of its vow to break with the policies that brought the country to ruin. Key campaign promises included restoring the country’s minimum wage to pre-crisis levels, reversing privatizations and reviving the country’s battered health and education systems.

Winning 36 percent of the popular vote — good for two parliamentary seats short of a majority — Syriza was able to form a new government when it forged an alliance with a small right-wing populist party on the basis of a common anti-austerity platform. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras quickly named his cabinet. Foreign Affairs, Finance, Education and other major cabinet positions are firmly in the hands of the party’s intellectual leaders. Only internal security fell to Syriza’s right-wing partners, who delivered 13 parliamentary votes to bring it to power.

The rise of Syriza — the name stands for Coalition of the Radical Left — from a marginal party that garnered only 4 percent in the 2009 elections to its current commanding heights was fueled by Greece’s ongoing economic tragedy as well as by the existence of a vibrant, deeply rooted left culture that is rare today in most Western countries.

The party is made up of social movement activists, a segment of rural groups, a breakaway faction of the Greek Communist Party and a wide range of independent leftist intellectuals. For the past decade its practice has been in the social movements: in housing, against unemployment, especially among youth, and in street protests against the government’s cuts to education and health budgets.

Syriza’s triumph was the most exciting and hopeful development on the political scene in decades. It marked a first-ever breakthrough of an avowed anti-capitalist party against Europe’s pervasive austerity regime, dictated by Germany through the troika of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Yet, after a tumultuous first month in power that saw its domestic approval ratings climb to 80 percent, the Syriza government found itself struggling to wrest concessions from the troika and the haughty figures of German power that stand behind these institutions: Chancellor Angela Merkel, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

## TENSE NEGOTIATIONS

When Tsipras and Varoufakis, now Greece’s Finance Minister, took office, they started out seeking a reduction in Greece’s 240 billion Euro debt (\$273 billion), an end to the bailout and the austerity conditions attached to it. They also sought a four-month bridging loan that would enable the new government to pursue Keynesian policies that would stimulate the economy and begin to put people back to work. Varoufakis floated the idea of converting part of Greece’s debt into new “growth bonds” to be paid off from the increased revenues that would materialize once the Greek economy began growing again. The latter proposal won approving comments from many progressive economists. However, when Greece’s new leaders visited European capitals in February, they received a few feeble words of sympathy from French and Italian officials but otherwise ran into a wall of opposition from European governments.

Faced with an end-of-the-month deadline for making a key debt payment and the prospect of a bank run if Greece was kicked out of the 19-nation Eurozone, on February 20 the Syriza government blinked. It received a four-month extension of the bailout based on the same terms accepted by the previous Greek government.

The Greek government was also required by its creditors to spell out how it would resolve the country’s debt crisis. The long list of reform measures put

**WHILE MANY OF THE GREEK GOVERNMENT’S CRITICS ON THE LEFT ARE WELL MEANING AND HAVE LOFTY IDEALS, THEY LACK A SERIOUS UNDERSTANDING OF HOW POWER WORKS IN THE REAL WORLD AND WHAT NEGOTIATIONS ENTAIL.**

To say that Syriza has caved shows that while many of Syriza’s critics on the Left are well-meaning and have lofty ideals, they lack a serious understanding of how power works in the real world and what negotiations entail. This is an opening round in a much longer drama that will unfold over the coming months.

There are still three potential outcomes for the Greeks: capitulation, partial victory within the framework of the Eurozone or exit. At this moment none can be excluded, although the first option is not really possible if Syriza wants to stay in power. Greece has a militant tradition that simply is not present in the United States: Communist-led armed resistance to Nazi occupation during World War II, the subsequent civil war between communists and local fascists, the overthrow of a U.S.-backed military junta by student-led protests in 1974, the real mass movement that brought Syriza to power



BETH WHITNEY

and a radical wing within that movement that is determined to pressure the government to move to the left.

#### WHY STAY IN THE EUROZONE?

Given everything, why is Syriza trying to stay in the Eurozone? Why doesn't it revert to printing Greece's traditional currency, the drachma, and make a go of it free from the stultifying grip of neoliberal austerity?

The question brings to mind the debate that preoccupied Soviet leaders in the first years after the Russian Revolution: Was it possible to create "socialism in one country"? Lenin and Trotsky thought not. Starting in the late 1920s, Stalin embarked on just such a program through forced collectivization of the countryside and relentless industrialization based on the subordination of the working class. Though this regime carried on for decades, it never succeeded in meeting the vital needs of its people.

This speaks to Greece's capacity to really be self-sufficient. Its best-known exports are olive oil, cheese, yogurt and wine, which can hardly sustain a population of 11 million or provide the taxes needed for public goods. In this epoch of global capitalism, Greece remains a minor, dependent player in both the European and world economies. Syriza's activists and intellectuals are keenly aware of the risks of taking power under these circumstances. As Varoufakis wrote in a 2013 article, the Greek Left can rely on an updated Marxist analysis to help clarify the situation they face. But, he argued, its goals and program are obliged to take account of the limits forced upon them by relative isolation and by the country's dire economic crisis. Polls of Greek voters showed a strong preference for remaining in the Eurozone even while wanting to break with austerity. On some level, the average Greek also seems to understand that their country is in a poor position to strike out into the world.

#### SYRIZA'S BEST HOPE

Syriza's best hope lies in being a catalyst that helps to bring other anti-auster-

ity parties to power in Europe. In Spain, where unemployment hovers around 25 percent, the leftist Podemos party has vaulted to second place in the polls in one year and will make a strong bid for power in elections this fall. The post-2008 legacy of onerous debt and austerity also hangs over Ireland, Portugal and Italy. Only if and when Syriza can participate in a broadened series of anti-austerity alliances with like-minded governments in Southern Europe and perhaps Latin America will it be possible to pose the prospect of radical transformation. In politics as in life, having the best of intentions is never enough. Good timing and the right set of circumstances are also essential for one's plans to come to fruition, as Syriza and its supporters are being reminded.

#### SYRIZA'S BEST HOPE LIES IN BEING A CATALYST THAT HELPS TO BRING OTHER ANTI-AUSTERITY PARTIES TO POWER IN EUROPE, STARTING IN SPAIN, WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT HOVERS AROUND 25 PERCENT.

*Stanley Aronowitz is a professor of sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center and the author of more than two dozen books, including *The Death and Life of American Labor: Toward a New Workers' Movement* (Verso, 2014). He hosted the leaders of Syriza when they visited the Graduate Center last year during their pre-election tour of the United States.*

## KEEP THE PROMISE OF CUNY

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# EDUCATION AS A COMMODITY

## CHILE SEEKS TO BREAK WITH A DICTATOR'S LEGACY

BY EMILY ACHTENBERG

In late January, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet signed into law the most significant educational reform the country has seen in 30 years. Enacted after an eight-month legislative battle, the new law will gradually ban profits, tuition fees and selective admissions practices in privately owned primary and secondary schools that receive state subsidies.

The long-awaited education reform — preceded by a corporate tax increase that will raise \$8 billion annually for education and other social programs — addresses a key promise made by Bachelet and her center-left New Majority coalition during the 2013 electoral campaign. It has been widely hailed as a major step toward dismantling the market-based and socioeconomically segregated education system, a legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–1990). According to the Chilean NGO Educación 2020, a key actor in developing the reform package, “This law changes the Chilean education system, the most commodified in the world, by transforming education from a consumer good to a social right.”

As anticipated, the protracted legislative battle over the New Majority’s education reform galvanized strong opposition from conservative sectors. But dissent has also come from less expected quarters: the highly organized Chilean student movement. “This is not the reform we mobilized for,” proclaimed the University of Chile Student Federation (FECH), which spearheaded the massive 2011–13 demonstrations that catalyzed popular demands for education reform and paved the way for the New Majority’s electoral victory. “We have wasted a historic opportunity for educational reform, and also deeply damaged our democracy,” said Gabriel Boric, one of four student leaders elected to Congress in 2013 (who, nevertheless, voted for the reform).

### DISPARATE RESOURCES

To appreciate these surprisingly dissident perspectives, the new education reforms must be viewed in a broader historical context. The wholesale conversion of Chile’s system of universal free public education to a privatized, deregulated, demand-driven scheme, which began under Pinochet, was consolidated by subsequent democratic regimes. At the primary and secondary level, public schools have been systematically undermined by a municipalization strategy that generates widely disparate funding levels between jurisdictions, and by the creation of private schools that compete with public ones for state voucher subsidies.

Today, as resource-starved public schools continue to decline in quality, only 37 percent of Chilean students are enrolled in them (down from 80 percent in 1980). Private schools with state subsidies (like U.S. charter schools) are the fastest growing sector, representing 56 percent of enrollment. Of these, one-third are nonprofit (primarily owned by religious institutions) and two-thirds are for-profit. The remaining 7 percent are private with no state subsidies.

Most for-profit subsidized schools also charge tuition, and select (and retain) students based on their socioeconomic status, test scores and performance. As a result, each student buys the education that he or she can afford, and 44 percent of students — largely from poor neighborhoods and villages — do not complete high school. Still, even in the most selective institutions, students test well below average for the 34 developed nations that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), due to the lack of quality control of schools, teachers and teacher training.

At the higher education level, 80 percent of Chilean students now attend private universities or technical institutes.



MARCOS S. GONZÁLEZ/Flickr

These schools are the most expensive in the world, relative to per capita income. Students pay tuition at public universities, too, an unusual situation in Latin America.

While Chilean universities are technically required to operate on a nonprofit basis, recent investigations have documented illegal strategies used to divert funds for private gain, including service contracts and land or infrastructure leases with related for-profit entities. Universities are also highly segregated, with admission exams disadvantaging poor students from lower-quality high schools and channeling them to “storefront” institutes, where roughly half drop out with high debt burdens. Top-ranked schools, including state-subsidized public universities, are available only to elite students.

The result, according to Educación 2020, is a system of “educational apartheid” that is among the worst in the world. It reinforces and reproduces inequality in a country that has the most unequal income distribution among OECD member states (as well as the highest per capita income in Latin America).

### NOT FAR ENOUGH

Bachelet’s reforms, which seek to decommodify privatized primary and secondary education, are aimed at one portion of this repressive system. They will require owners of for-profit elementary and high schools to convert to nonprofit status and to admit students by lottery instead of discriminatory selection. Tuition fees will gradually be replaced by increased state subsidies.

Students say the reforms don’t go far enough and may fall short even in meeting their stated objective. They point to loopholes that will allow “flagship” schools to maintain selective admissions for up to 30 percent of their enrollment. Nonprofit schools can also retain transitional leasing arrangements with for-profit landlords, legitimizing continuing profits within the primary and secondary education system through the same subterfuges used by private universities.

The law, students note, also authorizes new forms of profit-taking, through state-guaranteed loans to finance the sale of for-profit schools to nonprofit operators at their subsidized market value. (An earlier proposal allowing the state to purchase these properties was scrapped, due to pressure from the Catholic Church, which owns a significant number of schools). The provision responds, in part, to a scare campaign mounted by the bill’s conservative opponents, who incited parents by raising the specter of massive private school closings in response to the ban on profits. (One newspaper ad posted in December read, in part: “Private subsidized school for sale: 2,000 students, excellent infrastructure, good parents, good teachers ...”)

Students also criticize Bachelet’s program for failing to restructure the decimated municipal public school system; improve teacher training, salaries and quality control of schools; or address their key demand for free and universal higher education. Bachelet has promised additional legislation this year to deal with these issues, including free universal education by 2020, though few details are forthcoming as of yet.

More fundamentally, the FECH and Gabriel Boric argued that the reforms passed and contemplated to date do not break with the logic of the neoliberal education system and may even serve to reinforce it. By enshrining the voucher system, they contend, the reforms will continue the competition for enrollment and resources between public and

**STUDENT UPHEAVAL:** Chile’s powerful student movement led a series of mass protests from 2011–2013 that helped bring a new center-left government to power last year.

private schools that has destroyed quality public education. Indeed, Bachelet has marketed the current education reform, in part, as a project to enhance “school choice” by removing cost and selectivity barriers — even though the public sector, under current conditions, can’t provide a competitive alternative.

What’s needed, according to the FECH, is a complete re-nationalization and return of education to the public sector, with funding based on institutional need rather than demand. This contrasts sharply with the views of Bachelet and Educación 2020, who envision the end result of Chile’s reforms more as a mixed public-private nonprofit system, similar to the Netherlands or Belgium, that remains demand-driven.

### A GRADUALIST PROGRAM

Student leader-turned-legislator Camila Vallejo has taken a more pragmatic stance, endorsing Bachelet’s gradualist program as the most practical way to eliminate profits in education without a massive expenditure of state resources. Vallejo, who will chair the education commission in the Chamber of Deputies this year, will be in a key position to shape the New Majority’s future education agenda.

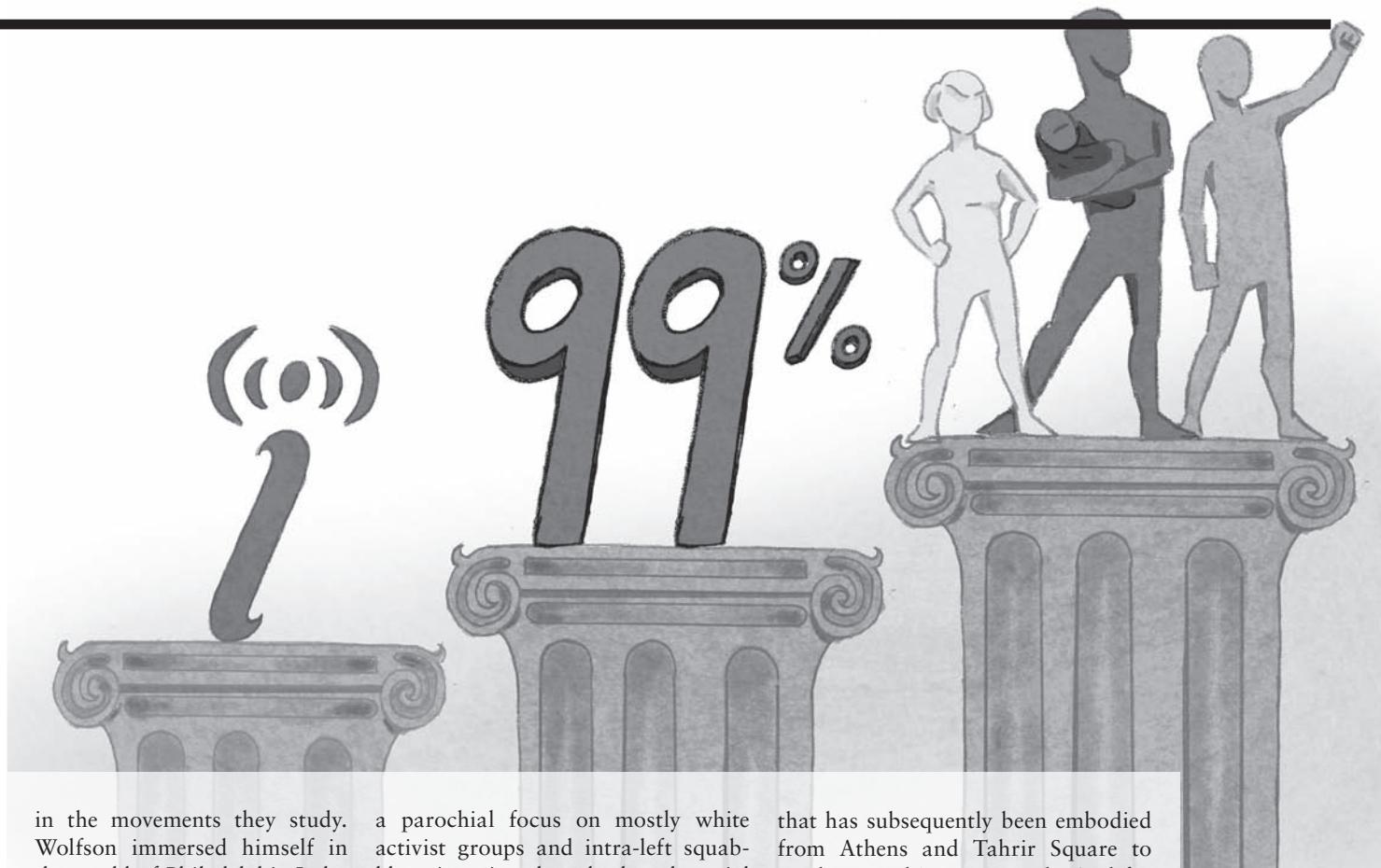
The upcoming legislative battle over higher education is expected to be much more contentious than last year’s struggle. Its outcome will be strongly influenced by the student movement’s continuing ability to articulate and link popular demands to a broader structural analysis, using the creative tactics (from school takeovers to “kiss-ins”) that have mobilized hundreds of thousands in the past.

Currently, the student movement appears to be at a crossroads. While massive demonstrations continued last year after Bachelet’s proposed reforms were announced, the passage of the bill has demobilized some sectors and created new organizational challenges.

The movement encompasses diverse political tendencies, and continually struggles to define its complex relationship to electoral politics. Recent elections have split the student leadership between left- (FECH) and right-wing (Catholic University) factions, with the latter opposed to nationalization of all universities. On the other hand, FECH, the largest organization, has successfully united its three major political constituencies and is well positioned to lead the upcoming battles of 2015 (dubbed by FECH the “Year of Higher Education”).

While Chilean students may be loathe to claim Bachelet’s reforms as a partial victory, their experience is teaching the world how mass popular movements can transform state policy — even if they can’t win everything at once — and how difficult it is to truly dismantle the entrenched neoliberal educational model.

*This article is a joint publication of The Indypendent and NACLA. Emily Achtenberg is an urban planner and the author of NACLA’s Rebel Currents blog, covering Latin American social movements and progressive governments ([nacla.org/blog/rebel-currents](http://nacla.org/blog/rebel-currents)).*



## INDYMEDIA & OCCUPY THE INSIDERS' VIEW

*Digital Rebellion: The Birth of the Cyber Left*  
TODD WOLFSON  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS, 2014

*The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement*  
MICHAEL GOULD-WARTOFSKY  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015

By Matt Wasserman

After the din of protest dies down come the works of social science. Activist-academics Todd Wolfson and Michael Gould-Wartofsky take as their research subject the social movements they were embedded in as participant-observers: Indymedia and Occupy Wall Street, respectively. *Digital Rebellion* and *The Occupiers* are their attempts to understand the movements' rise and fall.

Both Indymedia and Occupy arrived suddenly on the scene and rapidly rose to prominence, their reach extending beyond the usual activist circles, only to suffer a swift decline. For all intents and purposes, Indymedia is dead. NYC Indymedia — which this paper was once part of — is no longer and the global Indymedia website hasn't been updated for over a year. (Full disclosure: I was once a member of the editorial collectives for both). And Occupy was scattered to the wind with the forcible eviction of Zuccotti Park and its sister encampments. Seeds such as Occupy the Hood and Occupy Sandy briefly took root, but have since withered.

Nonetheless, the immediate results of both movements were significant. Occupy brought questions of economic inequality to the fore, making them a major political issue. And Indymedia played a leading role in the rise of citizen journalism, now a staple of political protests, while also serving as a precursor to contemporary forms of crowd-sourced media.

Both authors were deeply involved

in the movements they study. Wolfson immersed himself in the world of Philadelphia Indymedia as a grad student at the University of Pennsylvania. And Gould-Wartofsky became involved in Occupy as a doctoral candidate at New York University. He photographed its protests, took notes about meetings and marches and conducted 80 interviews of activists in New York and across the world.

Social movement theory emerged as a distinct subfield of sociology as the remnants of the New Left sought refuge in the academy, trying to figure out what went wrong while trying for tenure. The resulting work is often neither fish nor fowl, caught between serving the two masters of disinterested scholarship and activist agendas. The best of the genre, however, manages to bridge this divide, using the toolbox of social science to get under the skin of social movements and see what made them grow and die, in the process informing future generations of organizers about which strategies succeed and fail in working for a better world.

*Digital Rebellion* straddles this divide uneasily. While Wolfson's descriptions of the inner workings of Indymedia are informative, they have the feel of a monograph. On the other hand, while his positions on issues that divided the network, such as how activist journalists should relate to social movements, are supported by his empirical research, they seem to be more rooted in his participation in intra-network disputes. And, finally, while his grasp of academic debates is sophisticated, his discussion of social theory may leave the more practice-oriented bored.

The most compelling part of the book is Wolfson's critique of the limits of the purely "horizontal" and online organizing that was characteristic of Indymedia. What resulted was a digital version of the "tyranny of structurelessness," elevating the voices of the usual (white, upper-middle-class) suspects. As a consequence, local Indymedia collectives often maintained

a parochial focus on mostly white activist groups and intra-left squabbles, ignoring broader-based social movements and failing to play a role in organizing efforts. Philadelphia Indymedia dealt with this problem by working with Jobs with Justice and local unions to cover issues that would otherwise go unreported by the mainstream media, helping train working-class participants to "be the media," but they were the exception and not the rule.

*The Occupiers* is more successful as both a work of scholarship and a study guide for organizers. It is not only compulsively readable but also impressively synoptic. Gould-Wartofsky weaves a rich narrative tapestry, charting the rise and fall of Occupy without romanticizing it or giving a one-sided account of the ideology of its participants. He carries out an ambitious research agenda, studying the social origins of the occupiers, their politics, how direct democracy actually functioned and how Occupy

that has subsequently been embodied from Athens and Tahrir Square to Madison and Zuccotti Park. And for Gould-Wartofsky, Occupy marks the potential emergence of a new subject of struggle (or a "class-for-itself") and a return of the issue of inequality to the center of political struggles.

It is too soon to say what the ultimate import of Indymedia and Occupy will be. But if they are ultimately to give birth to more transformative social movements, it will be due in no small part to the ministrations of activist intellectuals like Wolfson and Gould-Wartofsky who seek to understand these movements and their shortcomings from the inside. Both authors occupy a position of engaged critique, making no secret of their sympathy with the social movements they were a part of without pulling their punches. In reconstructing the reality of Indymedia and Occupy, they bring out their contradictions, showing how the practice fell short of the theory and demonstrated its blind

### OCCUPY BROUGHT QUESTIONS OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY TO THE FORE, MAKING THEM A MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUE. AND INDYMEDIA PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE RISE OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM, NOW A STAPLE OF POLITICAL PROTESTS.

interacted with "the established institutions of social and political life." And he is sensitive to how his role as a "white guy in a blazer" affected his interactions, and to how issues of class, race and gender informed — and deformed — organizing efforts. This is as close to a definitive account of Occupy as has been produced thus far. Perhaps most intriguing is his tracking of the occupiers into exile and speculations on the potential of Occupy to be a mere opening act in a prolonged struggle over socioeconomic inequality.

Cycles of social movements often take decades to play out. Wolfson and Gould-Wartofsky convincingly argue that both Indymedia and Occupy emerged from and in reaction to previous social movements, but also mark the opening of a new phase of struggle. For Wolfson, Indymedia embodied a new form of horizontal, digital organizing of social movements

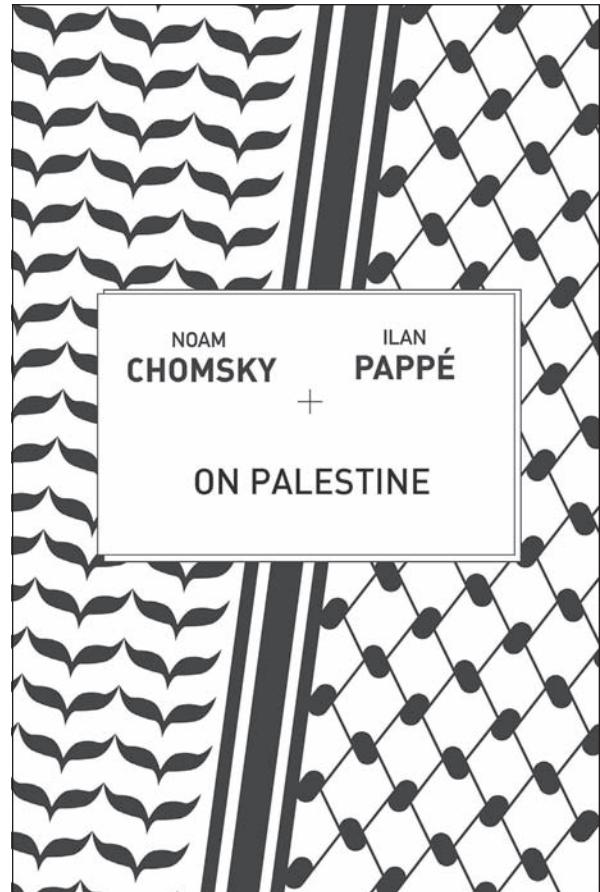
spots.

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, Marx wrote that "[t]he tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living." He described how the revolutionaries of 1848 conceived of their struggles in terms of the imaginary of the French Revolution, adopting the costumes and roles of their fore-runners. Armed with *Digital Rebellion* and *The Occupiers*, future generations of organizers will be better equipped to learn from the failures of their predecessors and build on their work rather than simply emulating it.

# ON PALESTINE

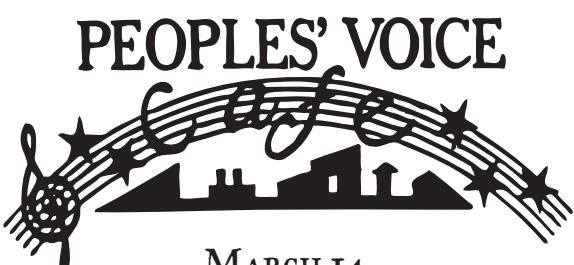
Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé

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## EXHIBITION

### THE RED DECADE ART WITH A GRITTY HEART

*The Left Front: Radical Art in the "Red Decade," 1929-1940*  
NYU GREY ART GALLERY  
THROUGH APRIL 4

By Gerald Meyer

The 1930s saw an outpouring of art that responded to the suffering people experienced during the Great Depression. Think of the photography of Dorothea Lange, the novels of John Steinbeck and the Dust Bowl ballads of Woody Guthrie. For anyone who was moved by the tales of economic devastation shared by the victims of the Great Recession who flocked to Zuccotti Park at the height of Occupy Wall Street, the imagery of the 1930s can take on an eerie resonance.

The NYU Grey Art Gallery brings the Depression-era aesthetic to life again with "The Left Front: Radical Art in the 'Red Decade,'" an exhibition that features more than 100 works by 40 artist-activists who devoted their talents to the twin causes of defeating the increasing menace of fascism and advancing the prospects of socialism. For most of these artists that meant mobilizing the working classes under the leadership of the Communist Party, which reached the zenith of its cultural and political influence in this country during the 1930s.

The works on display at "The Left Front" are not art for art's sake. They were created to serve a revolutionary cause and their message is direct and unambiguous: Workers and other victims of oppression need and merit the viewers' attention. Yet these works are not propaganda but artistic creations that evoke deep reflection and genuine emotions, reactions that more direct media, such as pamphlets and leaflets, were unlikely to elicit.

With few exceptions, these works are lithographs and other types of black and white prints that could be produced relatively cheaply and thus reach the widest possible audience. The presence of a few large paintings and drawings, as well as one outsized Spanish Civil War poster, add color and serve as centerpieces around which the curators mounted the smaller-sized prints. In a similar manner, the strategic inclusion of works by internationally recognized Mexican social artists — Diego Rivera, David Alvaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco — lends luster to the exhibition while acknowledging their powerful influence on the U.S. artists it features. These aesthetic choices, as well as the decision to organize the works thematically — "Class Struggle," "Workers of the World Unite!," "Popular Front" and "What Is Revolutionary Art?" — combine to give this relatively small show tremendous range and depth.

The "red art" on display does not, for the most part, project optimism; instead, the works seethe with indignation and determination. In Mitchell Siporin's woodcut, *Workers Family*, a family of five (father,



Mitchell Siporin, *Workers Family*, from the portfolio *A Gift to Biro-Bidjan*, 1937.

mother, infant, boy and grandfather) stands in the foreground, while in the background a factory's chimney belches smoke. Evidencing the times, the figures are thin and appear somewhat bewildered. Nonetheless, the son looks to his father with confidence. Somehow, the viewer is reassured that they are one unit that cannot be broken. Siporin is also asking the viewer to consider this family's plight within a context that leaves open the question of the factory, its use, its ownership and its relationship to this working-class family, representative of millions of other families like it.

Similarly, *Uprooted*, a lithograph by the prolific William Gropper, shows a family of three (husband, wife, young child) fleeing a parched, broken environment that calls to mind the destruction wrought by the dust storms of this period. The composition conveys the sense that this small family, while burdened by their remaining possessions like the family in Siporin's composition, is not doomed. Perhaps, it is the system, so indifferent to their plight, that deserves and someday will incur that fate.

The works comprising the exhibition were products of and for a consciously left community. Graphics became illustrations in books, magazines and advertisements for public meetings and theatrical productions. The exhibition extends the viewers' understanding of the subject by including samples of book illustrations, such as Rockwell Kent's illustrations of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and Gropper's illustrations of Marx's *Capital*. Most intriguing are the illustrations by Prentiss Taylor, a white man associated with the Harlem Renaissance, for *Scottsboro Limited: Four Poems and a Play in Verse* (1932) by Langston Hughes, Prentiss Taylor, and others.



*Mitchell Siporin*



ALL IMAGES COURTESY NYU GREY ART GALLERY

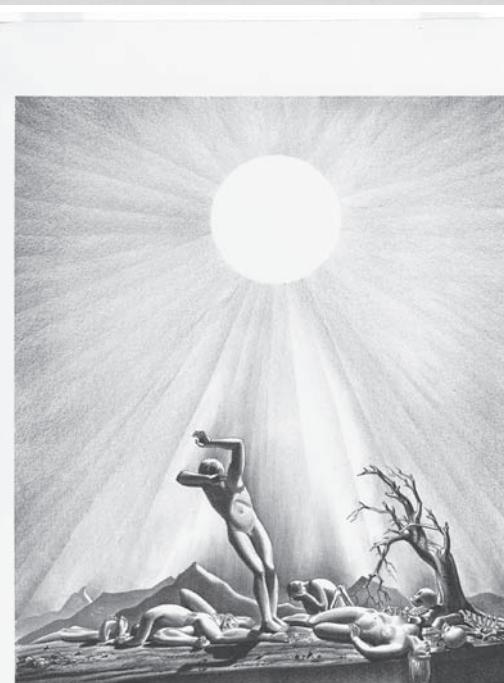


Prentiss Taylor, *Christ in Alabama*, from the portfolio *Scottsboro*, 1932.

tiss's friend and lover.

The contributions of Kent deserve special attention, not only because of his increasingly favorable reputation, but because his life and work illustrate key issues germane to the subject of this show. Kent, a devoted lifelong Communist, never worked in a social-realist style: His masterful work — detached, precise and at times, symbolic — communicated with clarity what was so often left unnoticed. Even the most casual visitor to "The Left Front" can note the obvious: While social realism is the predominant style, every imaginable graphic style, including surrealism and abstract expressionism, is on display. This show powerfully contradicts the canard that the Communist Party imposed social realism as the sole aesthetic style on artists.

While the outbreak of World War II disrupted the artistic movement on display at



Rockwell Kent, *Solar Flare-Up*, 1937.

the political and artistic commitments of the vast majority of the artists represented in the show continued. "The Left Front" in the sphere of the graphic arts was crushed during the anti-communist backlash that followed the end of the war. Today, its work reminds us that art doesn't have to exist solely for its own sake but can spur us to see the world as it is and as it could be, and to struggle for something better.

During this exhibition, the political and artistic commitments of the vast majority of the artists represented in the show continued. "The Left Front" in the sphere of the graphic arts was crushed during the anti-communist backlash that followed the end of the war. Today, its work reminds us that art doesn't have to exist solely for its own sake but can spur us to see the world as it is and as it could be, and to struggle for something better.

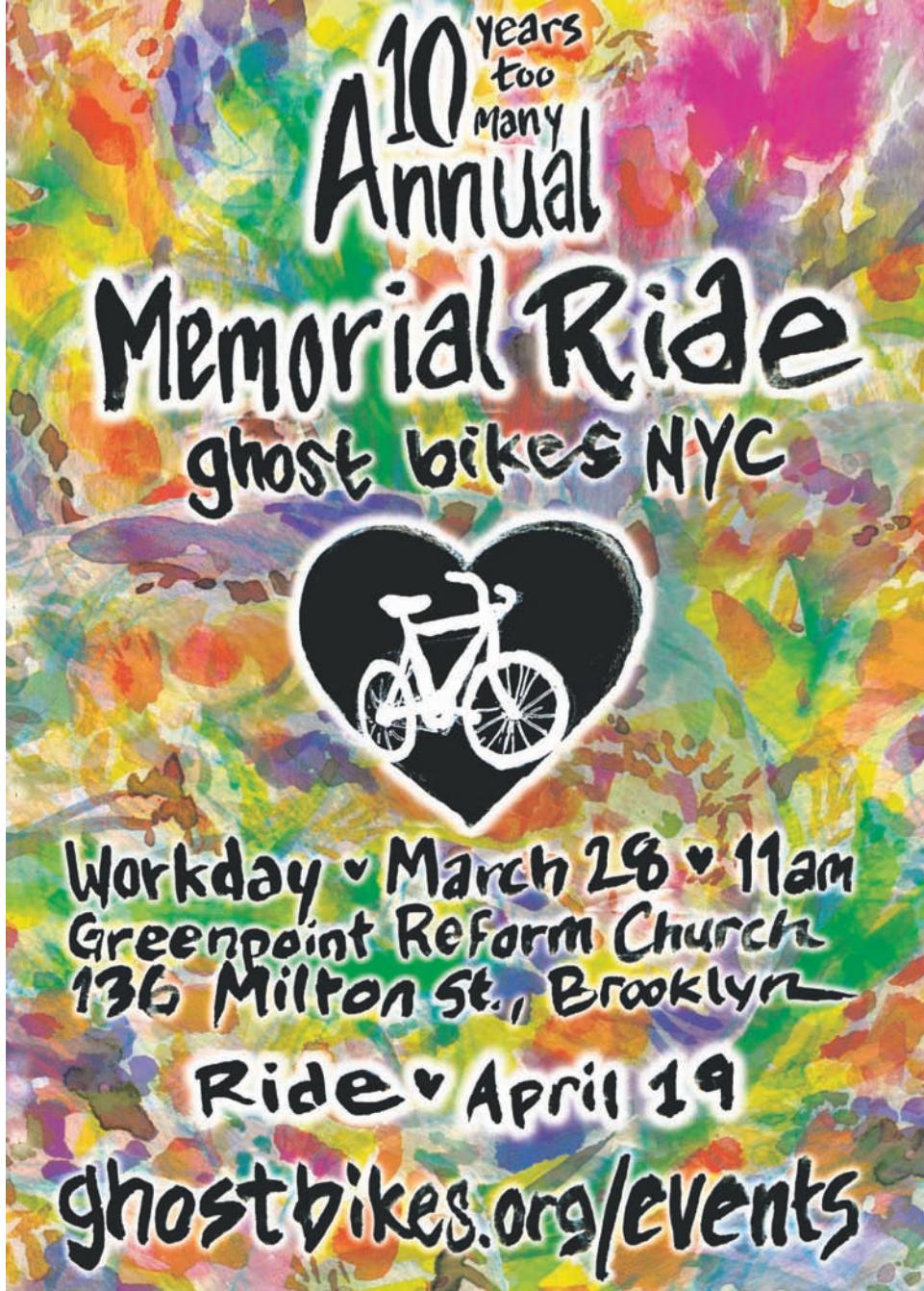
## AN EXPLORATION INTO THE RISE AND FALL OF THE INDYMEDIA MOVEMENT.

*"Combining the passion of an activist and the reasoned arguments of a scholar, Wolfson wonderfully details the emergence of the Cyber Left. In Digital Rebellion he not only celebrates its political potential but also, and more importantly, provides a lucid critique of the forms it has taken thus far."*

—MICHAEL HARDT, CO-AUTHOR OF  
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## PAINTINGS



COURTESY MOCADA

Sheena Rose, *Many Streets*, 2015.

## FEMALE HEROES, FANTASTIC JOURNEYS

*“Vision Quest”*  
MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN  
DIASPORAN ARTS  
THROUGH MAY 31

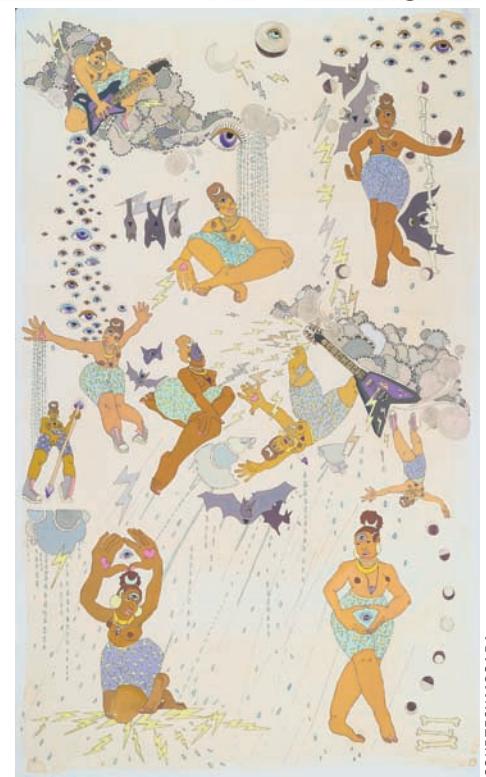
By Mike Newton

**A**maryllis DeJesus Moleski's women are on a journey. They ride sinewy steeds and clothe themselves in the hides of magical beasts. They wield glowing scepters and fight hordes of monsters. Also, they wear bright pink nail polish, diamond earrings and basketball jerseys.

Sheena Rose's work, meanwhile, takes a less fantastical approach to the idea of the journey. Her art has the amenable feel of a travel sketchbook, but with busy, overlapping lines suggesting some sort of algorithmic undercurrent — hand-drawn memories in the digital age. Her particular aesthetic is well utilized in humble animated videos, where she depicts herself doing everyday activities like waiting for the bus or sleeping. In perhaps her strongest piece here — a small drawing — Rose shows a small figure (maybe herself) trepidatiously setting out into a convoluted streetscape of wires and noise.

Race isn't the only thing going on in Rose's artwork — far from it — but in the context of an Afrocentric exhibition space, the work is necessarily cast through an African historical lens. Moleski and Rose's works are currently on view in “Vision Quest,” a two-person exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts. With that in mind, even the most humdrum of Rose's actions emerge out of a troubled history, recalling the oppressive restrictions that have been placed on those of African descent. There was a time when it would've been unthinkable for a young African woman to be out traveling on her own.

Similarly, in the context of African tradition and lineage, Moleski's paintings highlight some shared qualities of age-old African and European quest narratives. Her work, though, speaks more to the present than the past. Her characters are on an adventure, and not just into the heart of some imagined storybook hero's journey, but into the untamed wilds of blog rants and image memes. The creatures inhabiting these



COURTESY MOCADA

Amaryllis DeJesus Moleski, *Instructions for a Storm*, 2014.

paintings — like three-headed monster cats and rainbow-pooping ponies — come from Moleski's dream world, and also from the Internet.

The idea of fantasy — as a tried-and-true literary genre and as a guiding cultural force — has undergone some wild mutations thanks to digital culture. And yet, even now, the worlds of fantasy and science fiction remain dispiritingly white, with depictions of women hewing close to long-established norms of thin-and-paleness (consider the racial makeup of recent motion picture epics like *Game of Thrones* or *The Hobbit*). A 2014 study by Lee & Low Books found that of the top 100 highest-grossing sci-fi and fantasy films, only eight had protagonists of color (six of them portrayed by Will Smith). As science fiction writer Steven Barnes has said, most sci-fi is “white people and their imaginary friends.”

Here in the present, the thought of fantasy heroes as female, dark-skinned and full-figured — like Moleski's Day-Glo, three-eyed warriors — shouldn't be all that strange. And yet, these kinds of characters carry with them a pleasant shock of newness: they're familiar but with qualities that remain distinctly underrepresented in the genre. Perhaps, as far as heterogeneous, Internet-era fantasy stories go, the journey is really just beginning.

**THROUGH MAR 13**

Mon–Fri 11am–5pm • Free

**EXHIBITION: "HAUNTED FILES: THE EUGENICS RECORD OFFICE."** Dig through the drawers, files, note cards and forms of this 1920s office to uncover the details of the American eugenics project, which attempted to advance a vision of "race purity" through mass sterilization, mental institutionalization and immigration restriction. The exhibition exposes how the anti-Asian policies of the era laid the foundation for the racism of modern American politics.

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212-998-3700 • [apa.nyu.edu](http://apa.nyu.edu)

**THROUGH MAR 15**

Sat–Sun 4–6pm or by appt • Free  
**PHOTOGRAPHY: "RIP DIY."** Remember 285 Kent, Death by Audio and Glasslands? It'd be an understatement to say that the last year has been hard on Brooklyn's DIY music spaces. Cloud City's exhibition celebrates the DIY spirit by bringing together 20 photographers' documentation of the venues that have been forced to shutter.

Cloud City  
85 N 1st St, Bklyn  
[cloudcity.nyc](http://cloudcity.nyc)

**THROUGH MAR 22**

Sat–Sun 12–6pm or by appt • Free  
**EXHIBITION: "COUNTERFEITING FOR CASH."** What is authenticity and authorship? Flux Factory's 12 exhibiting artists will clue you in with their explorations of counterfeiting: Flux is serving as a hub for all kinds of counterfeits as they are inserted into places like Craigslist, the dark web, art markets and universities. Check out the closing reception on March 21, 7–9pm, for a special look at some very unexpected fakes.

Flux Factory  
39-31 29th St, Queens  
347-669-1406 • [fluxfactory.org](http://fluxfactory.org)

**THROUGH WED APR 11**

Tues–Fri 12–6pm, Sat 11am–6pm • Free  
**EXHIBITION: "YOU CAN CALL ME F."** Functioning as a forensic site complete with quarantine tents, "You Can Call Me F" explores the connection between the paranoia of contagious disease and the patriarchal fear of feminism. Artist Anicka Yi's work gathers biological information from 100 women to cultivate the idea of the female figure as a viral pathogen that must resist the efforts of outside forces to contain and neutralize it.

The Kitchen Gallery  
512 W 19th St  
212-255-5793 • [thekitchen.org](http://thekitchen.org)

**WED MAR 11**

6:30pm • Free

**DISCUSSION: WOMEN IN POWER: CATHERINE BEECHER, ELIZABETH GURLEY FLYNN, SHIRLEY CHISHOLM AND ANGELA DAVIS.** This panel discussion will consider how these women exercised power in often-hostile environments and advocated changes in American society. Panelists include biographers Cindy Lobel, Lara Vapnek, Barbara Winslow and Robyn Spencer.

Brooklyn Historical Society  
128 Pierrepont St, Bklyn  
718-222-4111 • [brooklynhistory.org](http://brooklynhistory.org)

**THUR MAR 12**

7pm • Free with museum admission, \$16  
**PANEL DISCUSSION: "I WILL RESIST WITH EVERY INCH AND EVERY BREATH: PUNK AND THE ART OF FEMINISM."**

Punk has long been a refuge for nonconformists and a platform for DIY experimentation. A conversation about the confrontational forces of punk rock and feminism with multidisciplinary artists, writers and curators Osa Atoe, Johanna Fateman, Narcissister, Lydia Lunch and Astria Suparak.

Brooklyn Museum  
Cantor Auditorium, 3rd Fl  
200 Eastern Pkwy  
718-638-5000 • [brooklynmuseum.org](http://brooklynmuseum.org)

**FRI MAR 13**

6–9pm • Free

**FILM: "OUR DAILY BREAD."** Nikolaus Geyrhalter's 2005 documentary is a visually stunning exposé of industrial farming and food production. Presented by PSC CUNY as part of its Labor Goes to the Movies series.

PSC Union Hall, 16th Fl  
61 Broadway  
212-354-1252 • [psc-cuny.org](http://psc-cuny.org)

**SAT MAR 14–SUN MAR 15**

Various times • \$12–15

**CINEMA: NEW YORK PEACE FILM FESTIVAL.** The eighth annual New York Peace Film Festival will feature films about fracking, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the renewable energy revolution, conflict in the Congo, Zionism and more. Kickoff party March 13 at 7pm. For a screening schedule, visit the website.

Unitarian Church of All Souls  
1157 Lexington Ave  
[nypeacefilmfest.com](http://nypeacefilmfest.com)

**MON MAR 16**

6–9pm • Free

**MEETING: OUR CITY, OUR CLIMATE: A FORUM ON NYC CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION.** It's been six months since more than 400,000 people marched in the streets

of New York City to demand that world leaders address climate change. After the People's Climate March is the People's Climate Movement. Join PCM organizers, labor and community representatives, city council members and others to discuss pending and needed legislative action on climate change in the city.

DC37, AFSCME  
125 Barclay St  
[tinyurl.com/ourclimateforum](http://tinyurl.com/ourclimateforum)

**MON MAR 16–SAT MAR 22**

Showtimes vary • Free-\$15

**CINEMA: SOCIALLY RELEVANT FILM FESTIVAL NYC.** This year's festival will include films from more than 30 countries and will spotlight issues like discrimination, police brutality, immigration, LGBTQ rights and much more. Most screenings will be followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers. Check out the festival's website for showtimes and prices.

Tribeca Cinemas / Proshansky Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center / Maysles Cinema  
54 Varick St / 365 Fifth Ave / 343 Malcolm X Blvd  
212-253-2022 • [ratedsrfilms.org](http://ratedsrfilms.org)

**TUE MAR 17**

7pm • Free

**BOOK LAUNCH: "TERMS OF SERVICE."** "Terms of Service" is a call for social media users to take back ownership of their digital lives. Join the book's author Jacob Silverman for a discussion about the most pressing issues around social media, including surveillance, cultural conformity and the hazards of personal expression on the web.

Powerhouse Arena  
37 Main St, Bklyn  
718-666-3049 • [powerhousearena.com](http://powerhousearena.com)

**WED MAR 18**

6:30pm • Free

**DISCUSSION: QUEER GENEALOGIES.** Coinciding with the release of the "Queer" issue of *Aperture Magazine*, Stanford University art history professor Richard Meyer will moderate a panel discussion about how contemporary photographers have cast their attention backward to draw on and engage the visual record of gay, lesbian, trans and non-normative sexualities.

The New School, Wollman Hall  
56 W 11th St  
212-229-2436 • [veralistcenter.org](http://veralistcenter.org)

**THUR MAR 19**

6:30pm • Free

**SCREENING: "SHE'S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE'S ANGRY."** Engage in a talkback with director and producer Mary Dore following a screening of her film *She's Beautiful When She's Angry*, which

depicts the explosion of the women's liberation movement during the late 1960s. The documentary spotlights some of "the outrageous, often brilliant women" who galvanized the contemporary struggle for women's rights.

Brooklyn Historical Society  
128 Pierrepont St, Bklyn  
718-222-4111 • [brooklynhistory.org](http://brooklynhistory.org)

**FRI MAR 20**

4–10pm • \$15 suggested

**EVENT: PERVERSIVE FEMINISMS.** Milk and Night Curatorial presents a happening of performance art, spoken word, live music, photography and discussion on traditional topics of "No Wave" feminism and the role of the empowered female form in religious space.

Lutheran Church of the Messiah  
129 Russell St, Bklyn  
347-449-1859 • [on.fb.me/1MggR8Z](http://on.fb.me/1MggR8Z)

**THUR MAR 26**

6pm • Free

**DISCUSSION: FROM THE SANS-CULOTTES TO THE ZAPATISTAS: REVOLTS, INSURRECTIONS, REVOLUTIONS.** Join authors Eric Hazan and Kristin Ross for a discussion on key moments in French revolutionary history and how they inspired populist, revolutionary movements around the world.

Maison Française, Columbia University  
515 W 116th St, Buell Hall  
212-854-4482 • [maisonfrancaise.org](http://maisonfrancaise.org)

**THUR APR 2**

6:30pm • Free

**DISCUSSION: ATLASES AGAINST EMPIRE: A WOMAN MEASURES THE CITY.** Writer, historian and activist Rebecca Solnit, who is credited with coining the term "mansplaining" in her feminist essay "Men Explain Things to Me" and is the author of numerous books about environment, landscape, community, art and politics, will present this year's Mumford Lecture on Urbanism at City College.

City College  
160 Convent Ave, Great Hall at Shepard Hall  
212-650-7000 • [ccny.cuny.edu](http://ccny.cuny.edu)

**SAT APR 4**

3pm • Free

**EVENT: PILLOW FIGHT NYC.** Yep, it's that time again — pillow fight! If you donate your pillow, Newmindspace, the organizing group, will make sure it gets to a NYC homeless shelter. Location to be announced

[on.fb.me/1EVdiTu](http://on.fb.me/1EVdiTu)

**TO SEE THE WORLD**

**ANEW:** Writer, historian and activist Rebecca Solnit (pictured above, top) will speak at City College on April 2. The event is free and open to the public.

**WOMEN IN POWER:** On March 11, the biographers of Angela Davis (pictured above in 1974), Shirley Chisholm, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Catherine Beecher will discuss how these well-known women exercised power while advocating for changes in American society.



## MNN: Manhattan's Community Media

Manhattan Neighborhood Network is Manhattan's **public access cable network** with studios in Midtown and East Harlem. We offer all Manhattan residents **FREE state-of-the-art studios** and **equipment** and media education classes in **studio and field production** and digital video editing.

MNN programs are created by you and reach Manhattan's over **620,000 cable subscribers**. We also stream all of our programs live online.

Visit [mnn.org](http://mnn.org) to learn more and for upcoming Midtown orientation dates!

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### *The MNN El Barrio Firehouse Community Media Center*

The MNN Firehouse on 104th Street hosts community events and Community Builders media education training. The Firehouse is also home to the Youth Media Center, offering programs, internships, and programming for young people ages 15-24.

Email [firehouse@mnn.org](mailto:firehouse@mnn.org) for more information and follow the Firehouse on [facebook.com/elbarriocommunitycenter](http://facebook.com/elbarriocommunitycenter).

